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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN AN APOSTLE OF TEMPERANCE AND PROHIBITION

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Base Slanders Refuted by  
**SAMUEL WILSON**

Regular as the seasons, with the approach of February twelfth the liquor press besmirches the fair name and fame of Abraham Lincoln by claiming him as one of their body and soul destroying craft. The current number of *Justice*, official organ of New Jersey liquor dealers, repeats the slander, and prints the portrait of the Great Emancipator as a "Friend of the Liquor Traffic." Under this title appears what purports to be a reproduction of a license to keep a tavern, issued March 6, 1833, to William F. Berry, in the name of Berry and Lincoln.

It makes no difference to these defamers that all through his life Lincoln was a total abstainer and consistent enemy of drink and the drink traffic; they try to hitch their dirty wagon to his star, and thus hope to borrow some respectability from his greatness and virtue.

Among America's greatest Sons there is none with a more pronounced and consistent anti-liquor record than Abraham Lincoln; and it is due to his name that it be defended against defamation by the slanders of base and greedy interests.

The incident of the "tavern" license referred to has been widely discussed. The date of this alleged license is 1833, when Lincoln was twenty-four years old, a raw country boy. He was persuaded into a partnership with another young man named Berry, and together they bought out a small country store. In such stores at that date it was a common practice to carry whisky in stock the same as molasses or vinegar, but there is no evidence that Lincoln ever sold or served liquor in the place, or favored its sale.

On the other hand, there is evidence that when Berry took out this license it was contrary to Lincoln's wishes, and was the cause of breaking the partnership.

Leonard Sweet, a Chicago lawyer, was an intimate personal friend of Lincoln, and in a volume entitled "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," he writes as follows of this incident:

A difference, however, soon arose between him and the old proprietor, the present partner of Lincoln, in reference to the introduction of whisky into the establishment. The partner insisted that, on the principle that honey catches flies a barrel of whisky in the store would invite custom, and their sales would increase; while Lincoln, who never liked liquor, opposed the innovation. He told me not more than a year before he was elected President that he had never tasted liquor in his life. "What!" I said, "do you mean to say you never tasted it?" "Yes; I never tasted it." The result was that a bargain was made by which Lincoln should retire from his partnership in the store.

An interesting corroboration of this from Lincoln's own lips will be found in Nicolay and Hay's reports of the famous debates with Douglas. In his first speech at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858, Douglas became tauntingly personal and referred to Lincoln's youth in these words:

"We were both comparatively boys, and both struggling with poverty in a strange land. I was a school teacher in the town of Winchester, and he a flourishing "grocery keeper" in the town of Salem. \* \* \* \* \* He could ruin more liquor than all the boys in the town together."

In these days in Illinois, a "grocery" was a synonym of our modern "saloon,"—as remembered by the writer, himself a native of Illinois. To this ill-natured taunt Lincoln replied:

"The Judge is woefully at fault about his friend Lincoln being a 'grocery keeper.' I do not know that it would be a great sin if I had been, but he is mistaken. Lincoln never kept a 'grocery' any where in the world."

Even though it were true that he had sold liquor when a young man of twenty-four, his after life was so pronouncedly against it that none but a dishonest person would claim him as a friend of the traffic.

From boyhood Lincoln was an advocate of total abstinence. His first printed composition was an essay on Temperance, and when a lad he signed a pledge in an old Indiana log school house at a temperance meeting addressed by "Old Uncle John," and years after he said to the speaker:

I owe more to you than to almost any one else of whom I can think, for if I had not signed the pledge, with you in the years of youthful temptation I might have gone the way that the majority of my comrades have gone, which ends in a drunkard's life and a drunkard's grave.

The evidence as to his total abstinence principles is

overwhelming, and vouched for by practically all his biographers. He delivered a most eloquent and memorable address before the Washingtonian Temperance Society in Springfield, Illinois, on Washington's Birthday, 1842. The full text of his speech was printed in the Sangamon Weekly Journal of March 26, 1842, and in it Lincoln used these prophetic words: "And when the victory shall be complete—when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth—how proud the title of that Land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both these revolutions, that shall have ended in that victory." He also uttered this bold statement which remains unchallengeable: "Whether or not the world would be vastly benefited by a total and final banishment from it of all intoxicating drinks seems to me not now to be an open question. Three-fourths of mankind confess the affirmative with their tongues, and I believe all the rest acknowledge it in their hearts."

Lincoln referred to this speech in a letter that he wrote at the time to young Pickett, afterwards the famous Confederate general who led the charge at Gettysburg, then a cadet at West Point, in these words: "I have just told the folk here at Springfield on this the 111th Anniversary of the birth of him whose name mightiest in the cause of civil liberty, still mightiest in the cause for moral reformation we mention in solemn awe, in naked deathless splendor, that the one victory we can ever call complete will be that one which proclaims that there is not one slave or one drunkard on the face of God's green earth. Recruit for this victory." See communication by Mrs. Pickett in McClure's Magazine, March, 1908.

The action of Lincoln in refusing to toast with wine the committee who called to notify him of his first nomination as a candidate for the presidency, will ever be an inspiration to lovers of moral heroism. According to Mr. Charles Carlton Coffin, author of a "Life of Lincoln," and Senator Shelby M. Cullom, a number of citizens of Springfield united in a request that, on this occasion, Lincoln put aside his usual total abstinence principles, and suggested that they be permitted to furnish the wine, but Mr. Lincoln courteously but firmly refused. Many versions of what followed have been written, but in our judgment the best is written by the Artist Carpenter, who painted the

great picture, "Signing the Emancipation Proclamation," in his volume entitled "Six Months in the White House." The story of an eye-witness is as follows:

Mr. Lincoln remarked that, as an appropriate conclusion to an interview so important and interesting he supposed good manners would require that he should furnish the committee something to drink; and opening a door he called out, "Mary! Mary!" A girl responded to the call, to whom Mr. Lincoln spoke in an undertone. in a few minutes the maid entered bearing a large tray containing several glass tumblers and a large pitcher and placed it upon the center table. Mr. Lincoln then arose, and gravely addressing the distinguished gentlemen, said: "Gentlemen, we must pledge our mutual healths in the most healthy beverage God has given to man. It is the only beverage I have ever used or ever allowed in my family, and I cannot conscientiously depart from it on the present occasion; it is pure Adam's ale from the spring," and, taking a tumbler, he touched it to his lips and pledged them his highest respect in a cup of cold water.

If further confirmation were necessary we have it from Mr. Lincoln's own hand, in a letter dated June 11, 1860, addressed to J. Mason Haight, which is reproduced in facsimile in these columns. (See fac-simile No. 1.)

We quote as follows from his intimate associates, to refute the vile slanders of the liquor harpies:

#### Son, Secretaries and Intimates Testify to Temperance Principles.

The Hon. Robert T. Lincoln, has stated that his father never used liquor or tobacco in any form, and quotes the following "sermon" as he called it, which he preached to his boys: "Don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, don't swear, don't gamble, don't lie, don't cheat. Love your fellowmen and love God. Love truth, love virtues and be happy."

The Hon. John Hay, who was Mr. Lincoln's private secretary testifies: "Mr. Lincoln was a man of extremely temperate habits; he made no use of either whisky or tobacco during all the years that I knew him."

Ward Lamon, Lincoln's old law partner, gives interesting testimony as to Lincoln's total abstinence principles in these words: "How many years he was an ardent agitator against the use of intoxicating beverages, and made speeches far and near in favor of total abstinence. Some of them were printed, and of one he was not a little proud."

Senator Shelby M. Cullom, of Illinois, gives this testimony in the Chicago Record Herald of May 16, 1908: "Lincoln never drank, smoked, chewed tobacco or swore. He was a man of the most simple habits. I recall distinctly when the Committee of Citizens, including myself, called at Lincoln's house after he was nominated for President to talk over with him the arrangements for receiving the Committee on Notification. Lincoln said, "Boys, I have never had a drop of liquor in my life, and I don't want to begin now." This part of the entertainment was provided for elsewhere.

Major William H. Crook, who was executive clerk at the White House during the administration of Lincoln, said regarding Mr. Lincoln's habits, "Never once while he was president, did I ever see or hear of Abraham Lincoln's drinking one drop of liquor of any kind."

William O. Stoddard, who was also one of President Lincoln's private secretaries, has stated that any liquors that were sent to the White House as a compliment to the president, were sent by him to the hospitals. In his volume entitled, "Inside the White House in War Times," he says regarding Mr. Lincoln's social habits:

"There is nothing of the sort at the White House at present, for Mr. Lincoln is strictly abstinent as to all intoxicating drinks. His first printed paper written while a mere boy was a vigorous denunciation of the evils produced by whisky on the settlers in the back woods of his then own state of Indiana. We are to dine with him today by special invitation, and you will see for yourself that there is no wine upon his table, but a large number of newspaper editors will tell you afterwards that your eyes deceived you, and that the president was much the worse after dinner."

General Horace Porter, who was on General Grant's staff during the civil war, and afterwards his private secretary, in his book entitled "Campaigning with Grant," on page 217, gives this interesting story regarding the visit of President Lincoln to General Grant at City Point. "General Grant said, 'I hope you are very well, Mr. President.' 'Yes, I am in very good health,' Mr. Lincoln replied. But I don't feel very comfortable after my trip last night on the bay. It was rough, and I was considerably shaken up, and my stomach has never entirely recovered from the effects.' An officer of the party now saw that an opportunity had arisen to make this scene the supreme moment of his life in giving

Private & Confidential.

Springfield, Ill., June 11, 1860

J. Mason Knight, Esq.

My dear Sir

I think it would

be improper for me to write, or say  
anything to, or for, the public, upon  
~~the public~~ subject of which you enquire.  
I therefore wish the letter I do write  
to be as strictly confidential—  
Having kept house sixteen years, and  
having never held the "cup" to the  
lips of my friends then, my judg-  
ment was that I should not, in my  
new position, change my habit in  
this respect. What actually occurs  
now upon the occasion of the com-  
munity visiting (or, I think, it would  
be better, for others to say

Yours Respectfully  
Abraham Lincoln

(Fac-simile No. 1.)

**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.**

Springfield, Ill., June 11, 1860.

J. Mason Haight, Esq.,

My dear Sir:

I think it would be improper for me to write or say anything to, or for, the public, upon the subject of which you inquire. I therefore wish the letter I do write to be held as strictly confidential. Having kept house sixteen years, and having never held the "cup" to the lips of my friends then, my judgment was that I should not, in my new position, change my habit in this respect. What actually occurred upon the occasion of the committee visiting me, I think it would be better for others to say.

Yours respectfully,

A. LINCOLN.

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him a chance to soothe the digestive organs of the Chief Magistrate of the nation. He said, 'Try a glass of champagne, Mr. President, that is always a certain cure for sea-sickness.' Mr. Lincoln looked at him for a moment, his face lighting up with a smile, and then remarked, 'No, my friends; I have seen too many fellows sea-sick ashore from drinking that very stuff.'

The late Vice-President Henry Wilson, in his Centennial Volume, refers to the incident of Mr. Lincoln's refusing to serve wine to the committee that notified him of his nomination. He described Mr. Lincoln's refusal to receive a present of champagne from his neighbors, and states that Mr. Lincoln uttered these words: "For thirty years I have been a temperance man, and I am too old to change."

**Declined Douglas' Offer to Treat.**

Judge Weldon relates how at a meeting at the Circuit Court at Bloomington, Illinois, a great crowd had gathered to hear Stephen A. Douglas speak in defense of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, that Lincoln called upon Douglas at the Cloudas House, where he was stopping, and the two had a pleasant chat of the old times on the circuit, and the progress of the state and its development. After Lincoln had been in the room a short time, Douglas proposed that they have something, a proposition which Mr. Lincoln promptly but courteously declined. "Why, do you belong to the temperance society?" asked Douglas. "No, I don't belong to any temperance society," replied Lincoln. "But I am temperate to this extent, I do not drink at all."

Dr. Robert H. Browne, author of "Abraham Lincoln and the Men of His Time," relates the oft repeated incident of Lincoln's showing his great strength by lifting a barrel of whisky above his head and taking a drink out of the bung-hole, and afterwards spitting the liquor out of his mouth; and he relates the following temperance speech then given by Lincoln. "My friends, you will do well, and the best you can with it, to empty this barrel of liquor on the ground as I did from my mouth. As a good friend, without counting the distress and wreckage of mind, let me advise that, if you wish to remain healthy and strong, turn it away from your lips."

There is also strong evidence that Lincoln was not only a total abstainer, but a Prohibitionist. Major J. B. Merwin, of Littlefield, Conn., who is still living at this writing at a venerable age, gives interesting reminiscences of his experiences while campaigning in the state of Illinois in the years 1854 and 1855, for the Maine law; he states that Abraham Lincoln was his traveling companion and lecturer to various towns and cities in Illinois, and gives extended extracts from speeches that Lincoln made, that space will not permit reproducing here. Later, when the Springfield lawyer became President of the United States, he commissioned Merwin as a special temperance evangelist to the Federal Army. In another column we give a facsimile in Lincoln's own hand writing, of the commission that he gave to Mr. Merwin to go anywhere that the public service might require. (See fac-simile No. 2.) Also another fac-simile of a communication from Lincoln to the War Department, bearing the endorsements of Generals Winfield Scott and Benjamin F. Butler. (See fac-simile No. 3.)

Major Merwin was in attendance at the great Jubilee Convention of the Anti-Saloon League held at Columbus, Ohio, in November 1913, and from the platform gave testimony that Lincoln was not only a total abstainer, but that it was in his mind as soon as the public policy would permit, to engage in a great struggle for ridding America of the drink traffic. We give below an extract from the testimony given by Major Merwin in the presence of upwards of 500 people. This extract is taken from the official stenographic report of the Convention, as reported in the American Patriot of December 1913.

"In the maturity of his statesmanship and experience—in fact, on the afternoon of the day in which Lincoln was

(Fac-simile No. 2.)

Order Written by President Lincoln to Facilitate Mr. Merwin's Work of Temperance in the Army.

Surgeon General will  
send Mr. Merwin where-  
ver he may think the  
public service may  
require.

A. Lincoln.

July 24, 1862.

Surgeon General will send Mr. Merwin wherever he may think the public service may require.

A. LINCOLN.

July 24, 1862.

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assassinated, he said to me as his trusted messenger:

"'Merwin, we have cleaned up, with the help of the people, a colossal job. Slavery is abolished. After reconstruction, the next great question will be the overthrow and abolition of the liquor traffic; and you know,' for I had known him since 1852 intimately, 'and you know, Merwin, that my head, and my heart, and my hand, and my purse will go into that work.'

"'In 1842—less than a quarter of a century ago—I predicted, under the influence of God's spirit, that the time would come when there would be neither a slave nor a drunkard in the land. I have lived to see, thank God, one of those prophecies fulfilled. I hope to see the other realized.'

(Fac-simile No. 3.)

Memorandum written by Mr. Lincoln to the War Department With Endorsements of Commanding Generals Favoring Mr. Merwin's Temperance Mission to the Army.

If it be ascertain'd at  
the War Department that  
the President has legal  
authority to make an  
appointment such as  
is asked within, and  
Gen. Scott is of opinion  
now it will be advanta-  
geous for good, then let  
it be done -

Jug 17. 1861 A. Lincoln.

I esteem Mr. Merwin  
W<sup>r</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Merwin to this  
army happy cir.  
constance; & request  
all commanders to  
give him free access  
to all of our camps  
& posts. I also request  
you to furnish

tell occasions to  
enable him to ad-  
dress our officers &  
men.

Wm. F. Smith

July 24, 1861

~~before offering~~  
The sending of Mr. Merwin  
will be, is ~~of great benefit~~  
~~to~~, of great benefit to the  
troops, and I will furnish  
him with every facility  
to address the troops under  
my command. I hope the  
for covering the Army  
will give him in the  
official position or ~~as~~,  
Merwin ~~any~~ ~~any~~ to  
carry out his object.

Jug 8. 1861 B. F. Butler  
My dear  
Jug

If it be ascertained at the War Department that the president has legal authority to make an appointment such as is asked within, and Gen. Scott is of opinion it will be available for good, then let it be done.

July 17, 1861.

A. LINCOLN.

I esteem the mission of Mr. Merwin to this army a happy circumstance, and request all commanders to give him free access to all of our camps and posts, and also to multiply occasions to enable him to address our officers and men.

July 24, 1861.

WINFIELD SCOTT.

Department of Virginia.

The mission of Mr. Merwin will be of great benefit to the troops, and I will furnish him with every facility to address the troops under my command. I hope the Gen'l. commanding the army will give him such official position as Mr. Merwin may desire to carry out his object.

Aug. 8th, 1861.

B. F. BUTLER, Maj.-Gen. Com'd'g.

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"It struck me as so important a statement that I said to him: 'Mr. Lincoln, shall I publish this back from you?' He instantly replied: 'Yes, publish it as wide as the daylight shines.'"

Mr. Merwin's statement that Lincoln campaigned for the Maine law in Illinois in 1855 is confirmed by Mr. A. J. Barber, President of the leading bank of Paris, Ill., who wrote to the Hon. John G. Woolley, a personal friend, as well as a friend of Mr. Woolley's father, under date of January 14, 1914, his recollection of Lincoln being at the Paris House during the court session of 1855, in company with Judge Harlan and others; and announcing that he had promised Col. Baldwin to make a temperance speech, and started to walk to the place of meeting six miles distant. This was in the heat of the campaign, Douglas and the Democrats generally opposing "Maine Lawism," and Whigs and Republicans mostly supporting Prohibition.

Dr. Howard H. Russell, General Secretary of the Lincoln-Lee Legion, has some very interesting data upon this subject, among them several affidavits from old men residing in Sangamon county, Ill., who stated that they signed a temperance pledge at a meeting held by Mr. Lincoln at Stony Point School House, in Sangamon county in

the year 1847, and the pledge as signed by them is given below.

Whereas, the use of alcoholic liquors as a beverage is productive of pauperism, degradation and crime; and believing it is our duty to discourage that which produces more evil than good; we, therefore pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

Naturally in a discussion of this character, many apocryphal and erroneous statements are likely to be made public. Among them is an often quoted statement to the effect that a delegation waited upon Lincoln objecting to General Grant, because of his alleged intemperate habits, and that Lincoln in answering them, asked what kind of whisky Grant drank, as he would like to send a bottle of the same to all of his other generals. There is not a scintilla of evidence as to the truthfulness of this statement, and it is undoubtedly an invention of the friends of whisky.

Another oft-quoted statement applied to Mr. Lincoln, is true in sentiment, but it is improper to give Mr. Lincoln the credit for its authorship. It is a statement reading as follows: "The liquor traffic is a cancer in society, eating out its vital, and threatening destruction, and all attempts to regulate it will not only prove abortive, but aggravate the evil, etc." This extract is a quotation from an address made by the Rev. Dr. John Smith, in the city of Springfield, Ill., on January 23, 1853. Immediately following the address on January 24, 1853, a letter was written to Dr. Smith, requesting a copy of the address for publication, and this letter was signed by a large number of residents of Springfield, and among them, Abraham Lincoln. While Lincoln was not the author of the sentiment, he was, in making this request for its publication, an endorser of the same. But friends of temperance ought to be careful to give credit to the proper source in making their quotations.

#### **Malicious Forgeries.**

The liquor traffic does not hesitate to indulge in misrepresentations and will even resort to forgery, as was proved in the year 1887, in an agitation in the city of Atlanta, Ga.

During the campaign at Atlanta, Ga., in 1887, which resulted in a victory for saloons, the liquor men used with success, the name of Lincoln to capture colored votes. They had hand-bills prepared, headed, "FOR LIBERTY! ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S PROCLAMATION!" Under-

neath this was a picture of a negro kneeling and kissing the President's hand, while near by stood the family, and on the ground the shackles. Following the picture were these words:

"Prohibition will work great injury to the cause of temperance. It is a species of intemperance within itself, for it goes beyond the bounds of reason, in that it attempts to control a man's appetite by legislation, and in making crimes out of things that are not crimes. A prohibitory law strikes a blow at the very principles on which our government was founded. I have always been found laboring to protect the weaker classes from the stronger, and I can never give my consent to such a law as you propose to enact. Until my tongue be silenced in death, I will continue to fight for the rights of man."

Then followed this appeal: "Colored voter, he appeals to you to protect the liberty he has bestowed upon you. Will you go back on his advice? Look to your rights! Read and act! Vote for the sale!"

A copy of this was sent to Hon. John Hay, and Mr. Nicolay, his private secretaries who were also his biographers, and the reply was received as follows from Mr. Hay:

"Neither Mr. Nicolay nor I have ever come across this passage in Mr. Lincoln's works, which we have been several years compiling."

Nevertheless the liquor press continue to repeat this nasty slander with each recurrence of Lincoln's birthday anniversary. It was recently repeated by the Champion of Fair Play, a liquor Journal published in the city of Chicago, with the accompanying statement, that Lincoln was not only a liquor dealer and barkeeper, but a can-rusher as well; and the National Model License League, under the management of Col. T. M. Gilmore, editor of Bonfort's Wine and Spirit Circular, the leading liquor journal of the country, has joined in circulating the same malicious slander upon the good name and fame of our greatest native American.

Notwithstanding this overwhelming array of evidence, from the mouth and pen of the martyred President himself, from a vice president, from his son, from three private secretaries, from White House attaches, from his law partner, from men who knew and worked with him for years, and from a long array of biographers who have made a careful study of his life and his work, the ghoulish liquor traffic will continue to attempt to bolster up their

fast-dying cause by dragging in the mire the name and the fame of one whom all patriotic Americans honor and love. There surely ought to be a law that will severely punish those who defame and scandalize the good name and reputation of the dead, just the same as there is law to protect the living, and just as there is a law that will protect the bodies of the dead. Were there such a law, the very first to come before the tribunal of justice, would be the liquor traffic for their oft-repeated defamation of the good name of Abraham Lincoln.



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